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ABSTRACT

Too often the dialect of the teacher or the student, or both, creates interferences which hinder the educational process. By being aware of potential problems in pronunciation, lexicon, and syntax, the teacher can explain or avoid language interferences. Furthermore, the teacher can consciously help the student avoid pejorative connotations some dialects have for some people. This handbook, designed to help teachers use workshops to disseminate information about regional and social dialects, is divided into four main parts. The first describes the purpose of the overall organization of the workshops. The second part contains the models, which are based on workshops that have been conducted, for the most part, in Clark County, Nevada, over a two-year period. The selected bibliography, the third part, is organized by collections and anthologies, books and monographs, dictionaries and reference works, recordings, and articles. The final part of the handbook is a directory of persons who have been supplied with lists of potential workshop leaders in their regions. (TO)

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A HANDBOOK OF SHORT COURSES IN DIALECT STUDIES FOR K-12 TEACHERS

Thomas L. Clark

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NATIONAL COUNCIL OF TEACHERS OF ENGLISH
1111 Kenyon Road, Urbana, Illinois 61801

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A HANDBOOK OF SHORT COURSES IN DIALECT STUDIES FOR K-12 TEACHERS

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University of Nevada

Jointly sponsored by the Commission on English Language
of the National Council of Teachers of English
and the American Dialect Society

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INTRODUCTION

This handbook is designed to help teachers disseminate information about regional and social dialects. Since the primary medium for education is the native tongue, everyone should know as much as possible about the medium and about the popular attitudes toward its varieties. Too often the dialect of the teacher or the student, or both, creates interferences which hinder the educational process. By being aware of potential problems in pronunciation, lexicon, and syntax, the teacher can explain or avoid language interferences. Furthermore, the teacher can consciously help the student to avoid pejorative connotations some dialects have for some people.

The handbook is divided into four main parts. The first describes the purpose of the overall organization of the workshops. The second part contains the models, which are based on workshops that have been conducted, for the most part, in Clark County, Nevada, over a two-year period. The selected bibliography, the third part, is organized by collections and anthologies, books and monographs, dictionaries and reference works, recordings, and articles. The final part of the handbook is a directory of persons who have been supplied with lists of potential workshop leaders in their regions. The workshop models call for teams of two to conduct the sessions. One member of the team is a specialist in dialect studies, the other is an experienced methods consultant. By writing directly to a regional coordinator, the representative of a school or district will be put in touch with nearby workshop leaders. Not only will this be less expensive for all concerned, but it will insure having a leader who is especially familiar with the dialects and problems in the immediate vicinity.

THE PURPOSE OF WORKSHOPS

The medium for the transmission of culture is the native language. A truism, yes, but forgotten so often that it bears repeating time and again. In a McLuhanesque age, when we are more aware of the message bombardment on the senses, we sometimes forget the practical realities of the unconscious teaching of cultural values in the classroom. If five percent of that classroom is black—transported from across town—five percent of the students in the classroom are likely to be neglected, unless the teacher is aware of language differentiation and prepared to make the students equally aware. If two or three or six students in a northern classroom are from the south, whatever their social status, they may suffer more from jeering classmates than from inability to understand the teacher. The responsibility of the teacher is to educate all students to accept the speech of others. In order to do this, the teacher must be free of prejudices toward speakers of other dialects.

Goals

Two important problems are dealt with in the workshops. The first concerns difficulties in classroom communication because of pronunciation, lexicon, and syntax. A good deal has been written about pronunciation patterns and lexical differences in regional dialects. Judicious use of a phonemic alphabet and of the works listed in the bibliography can answer most questions and describe various geographical distinctions. Sometimes greater detail is required. Important phonetic regionalisms may be buried by phonemic transcription, e.g., the so-called New England "broad *a*" before *s* as a low-front vowel. Generally, however, a workshop with participants from various disciplines requires that they be exposed to broad phonetic practices, since there is often scant time for a thorough grounding in phonetics. For the layman, social dialects tend to differ more noticeably in syntax than do regional dialects. Again, a good deal of information has been compiled in anthologies.

The second problem is more difficult. All of us have attitudes toward speakers of other dialects. Regardless of how we intellectualize our understanding or recognize our attitudes, few of us become completely free of "liking" one type of pronunciation, while finding another "grating." This does not mean we are less professional, only that each of us has human likes and dislikes. For example, many Midland Americans consider the speech of a Bostonian as somehow more "refined" or "cultured," and the speech of a West Virginian as "harsh" or "folksy." Correspondingly, the Bostonian is often thought to be more intelligent than the West Virginian, not because of what he says, but conversely because of how he pronounces it. The dialect of the mountaineer evokes

images of stereotyped poverty which are transferred then to the individual. This, in spite of the fact that many West Virginians make a social distinction between the dialect of the mountaineer and other Appalachian residents.

Once we recognize our attitudes toward speakers of regional dialects, we can at least minimize the transmission of pejorative attitudes toward certain social dialects. It is well known that cultural values are passed on by teachers in every subject area. For example, the elementary math teacher in Utah who ridicules a child's pronunciation of "four" educates the entire class. When an authority figure acts that way, the students develop a regrettable attitude which has little to do with math. By becoming aware of and verbalizing alternate attitudes, the teacher can go far toward alleviating a major source of frustration for students who "talk different."

Participants

The workshops are designed for all teachers, but especially those in the social sciences and language arts. In the past, participants who normally teach history, social studies, even home economics, have found countless pedagogical opportunities to utilize workshop materials. Yet when courses are offered on the university campus, teachers not specifically in the language arts area tend to avoid them. There seems to be a fear that the course will be "all grammar," or that one needs a special background in linguistics in order to participate. In addition, potential participants from other subject areas are simply not accustomed to seeking courses in the English or linguistics departments.

For these reasons, every attempt should be made to schedule workshops at the grade school, middle school, or high school. Doing so will insure representation from a greater variety of subject areas. In addition, it will enable the teachers to focus on materials and methods at their own school. Teachers from the same school know one another, and tend to mutually reinforce the principles discussed long after the conclusion of the workshop.

Financing

Workshops are normally sponsored by the school, the school district, or the university, and may obtain state funding if the workshop is regarded as curriculum development or an innovative aid to teaching.

School districts can use the shorter sessions for in-service training points or for credit toward the maintenance of certification. Often, if a university sponsors a workshop, the program is designated as an off-campus course. University credit may be given, but students may have to pay regular fees.

Post Workshop Activity

The greatest value of the workshop for the leaders is the opportunity to observe the participants in the classroom. By volunteering to visit any classroom in which the lesson plans prepared during a workshop are being used, the leaders can more fully assess their own effectiveness. In addition, after observation, leaders can offer suggestions that may not have occurred to them during the workshop.

WORKSHOP MODELS

The following models are relatively detailed, since they have been the most successful of many types attempted. It will be noticed that items added for longer workshops do not violate the overall system of approach. The models follow a specific format, beginning with regional dialects, then moving to social dialects. Not a few dialect specialists would argue that the division between regional and social dialects is an arbitrary one, and all would agree that every regional dialect has concomitant social considerations. There are two reasons, however, for this organization.

First, regional dialects have been extensively studied in this country since the early 1930's. At this time more is known about the varieties of regional speech than about the more recent work in urban sociolinguistics and social dialectology. A good deal of time is spent in every workshop examining what constitutes standard speech in different regions. It is often a shock for participants to discover that most of our concepts of "standard English" are based on written English, and that different regions have different spoken standards. By treating regional dialects first, the workshop leader is able to put all dialect studies into an historical perspective. Depending on the length of the course, the leader can take participants through a survey of earlier German, French, and Italian studies which lent so much to the development of the American linguistic atlases. The entire discipline is then seen as a solidly built scholarly pursuit with deep roots and long tradition, rather than as a pop-modern theoretical discipline.

A touchstone of regional differentiation in dialects is the phonological component. Participants in workshops are familiar with sound differences between, say, eastern New England speech and Southern inland speech, though they may not know the patterns inherent to each. They find it easy to believe that regional dialects are interesting to study and enjoyable because of the crossword puzzle characteristic: trying to determine where someone hails from because of his pronunciation.

The second reason for the format is to provide for more objective examination and discussion of the participants' attitudes toward regional dialects. If stereotyped prejudices are observed, they are more easily dealt with by pointing out reasons for the existence of regional varieties. After calmly discussing the baselessness for pejorative feelings toward less prestigious regional forms, the participants feel more at ease when it is suggested that dialects need not be tampered with—that Miss Fidditch be allowed to enjoy her retirement in peace.

The recognition and elimination of pejorative attitudes toward dialects is then transferred to social dialects. Even with a good deal of preparation, there is often a residual feeling of the "need for correctness" in treating social dialects. Workshops that have been conducted by treating

Name (optional) _____

Subject(s) taught _____ Grade level(s) _____

_____ _____

Previous courses in linguistics or dialectology _____

_____

Were abstract ideas and theories clearly explained? _____

Were divergent viewpoints clearly expressed? _____

What aspects are still unclear? _____

_____

_____

Could motivation be improved? _____ If so, how? _____

_____

What parts of the workshop will aid your own teaching most? _____

_____

What was the most valuable aspect of the workshop? _____

_____

_____ The least valuable? _____

_____

Which items would you like to see expanded in future workshops?

Examples _____ Lectures on methods _____

Recordings _____ Lectures on background _____

Readings _____ Discussion time _____

Other _____

Recommendations for future workshops _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

SAMPLE EVALUATION FORM

social dialects before regional dialects, or without even discussing regional dialects, have failed miserably to change attitudes toward speakers of socially less prestigious dialects. Part of this failure can be ascribed to the fact that social dialects are more often distinguished by grammatical variation than by phonology or lexicon. This is not to say that phonological or lexical distinctions are any less notable in social dialects than in regional varieties, but rather that the sense of error is greater in such things as null possessive or zero copula.

Many participants, especially in the longer workshops, are anxious to deal with social dialects as soon as possible. For them, the practical problems they encounter in the classroom are more immediate on a social scale. However, as they come to realize that all of dialectology must be treated in an orderly fashion, such temptations lessen. As each participant recognizes that students must be exposed to dialects in a way that helps to construct desirable attitudes, that he can be working on a peripheral level with classroom problems created by social dialects, then the purpose of the workshop is served.

One Day Presentation

This type of presentation is given almost entirely by lecture. The first four hours are taken up by the linguist. Then, the methods instructor spends two hours discussing pedagogical applications. In the final two hours, the participants discuss among themselves the potential applications in their own teaching areas and grade levels. During this time, the participants also submit written questions and fill out a short evaluation form, (see sample on page 6). Although evaluation is standard, it is of utmost importance to workshop leaders and determines modification of future presentations; consequently, it should be made as detailed as time allows.

First hour — The introduction emphasizes both the social importance and historical perspective of dialect studies.

Second hour — Regional variation is discussed, beginning with lexical items from Hans Kurath, *A Word Geography of the Eastern United States*, and localisms supplied by the workshop leader and participants. Phonological system is introduced with two or three selections of "My Eccentric Grandfather" from John T. Muri and Raven I. McDavid, Jr., *Americans Speaking*. As an exercise, participants are asked to write down their impressions of the speakers reading the set passage. Participants discover that they have attitudes concerning the intelligence and personality of the speakers, though all are reading the same words. This leads to a discussion of potential pejorative attitudes.

Third hour — The discussion of attitudes overlaps into the third hour. Social dialects are then introduced with a discussion of various stigma attached to syntactic forms.

Fourth hour — The phonology and lexicon of social forms within regions are described with the aid of tapes and recordings.

Fifth hour — The methods instructor discusses the applications of dialect studies in the classroom. Each participant should have a copy of *Discovering American Dialects* by Roger W. Shuy.

Sixth hour — The application of social dialect studies in the classroom should familiarize participants with readings such as part two. *Readings in American Dialectology*, Allen and Underwood, eds. and *The Florida FL Reporter*, vol. 7, no. 1.

Seventh hour — Participants discuss methods for classroom applications of dialect findings, according to grade level and teaching area.

Eighth hour — Participants submit written questions to workshop leaders and complete evaluation form. It is important that enough time be allowed to complete evaluation.

Two Day Workshop

This workshop differs from the first in that discussion groups are held each afternoon rather than at the end of the session. Participants are able to discuss regional and social dialects separately. The two day workshop has proved most successful in creating an awareness of the individual's attitudes toward dialects other than his own. A longer workshop, however, is required to create attitudinal change from that awareness. The following outline is truncated, since the material presented is essentially the same as for a one day presentation. Additional time is taken up by the heuristic nature of the discussions.

First day — The morning is taken up with an introduction to regional dialects. The fact that everyone has a dialect is emphasized. Participants are led into a discussion of their own dialects. Lexical variations are described, then the phonological systems of different dialects. Each passage of "My Eccentric Grandfather" is played while the students make notes on their own attitudes toward the speakers. The free conversation on the recording may be played later.

The first part of the afternoon is devoted to dialects encountered in the region in which the workshop takes

place. Participants are encouraged to discuss dialect forms they have encountered in the classroom, concentrating on interferences students have demonstrated not only in speaking, but also in writing and reading. In dealing with this last, the methods instructor plays a more important role than the dialect specialist.

Second day

The morning is devoted to an introduction to social dialects, their relation to regional dialects, reasons for their existence, and the attitudes toward them. An hour or more should be set aside for the discussion of nonstandard and standard social ranges. Participants will wish to spend much time discussing correctness and the teacher's role in transmitting community standards to the students. This is normally the most volatile period in the workshop. The transference of attitudes from regional dialects to social dialects is facilitated as the linguist describes the regularity of syntax and phonology evidenced in nonstandard and unfamiliar dialects.

The afternoon is devoted mainly to recognizing the need to appreciate dialects, be they regional or social. As participants come to recognize dialects as equal from a descriptive standpoint, methods for introducing dialect studies into the classroom begin to emerge. The final hour is devoted to the evaluation.

One Week Workshop

The longer one- and two-week workshops differ from the shorter sessions in that members are expected to prepare lesson plans designed for use within their grade levels and subject areas. At this point in the process, the teacher becomes acutely aware of the unconscious transmission of attitudes in the classroom. A formal approach to dialects helps to modify any pejorative attitudes that may have been set earlier.

In the one week workshop, mornings are used for lecture and demonstration by the linguist and methods instructor. The organization varies from shorter workshops in that social considerations in dialect studies are introduced on the first morning, right after regional dialects. Afternoons are devoted to reading bibliographic material and to discussing the morning lectures and the materials just read. Time is set aside each afternoon for preparation of lesson plans by the participants. The first afternoon differs from the others in that a reading and discussion of *Discovering American Dialects* is recommended. The last hour of the final afternoon, of course, is devoted to evaluation.

First morning

The linguist devotes most of the morning to an introductory lecture and demonstration of phonology, lexicon, and syntax in regional and social dialects.

Second morning The concentration is on phonology with some elementary exercises in broad transcription.

Third morning The history of dialect studies is introduced. Further attention is given to lexicon in dialect.

Fourth morning Syntax in dialect is described. The methods instructor will devote time to applications of dialect interferences in reading and writing.

Fifth morning Potential applications of the week's readings to classroom practices are discussed. The lesson plans are described by members of the workshop. Concepts which overlap at different grade levels should be talked about. The teachers discover something about their own attitudes toward students in this session. For example, a fifth grade teacher may be hesitant about discussing phonological variation in class, while a third grade teacher may have the same material in the lesson plan.

Two Week Workshop

The two week workshop is an intensive course in dialect studies and classroom methods. Since the time is more flexible, and consideration of local dialect variations must be made, what is offered here is a general scheme, rather than an outline.

The first week will be devoted to regional dialects, the second to social dimensions in dialect studies. During the first week, time may be spent on intensive phonological practice. Some work with eye-dialect in literature is appropriate during the first week, with exercises in literary dialects which demonstrate pedagogical possibilities for the teachers. In addition, the first week allows time to sample numerous dictionaries and the atlases brought by the workshop leaders. Each participant is assigned one or two journal articles relative to regional dialects. By giving an oral report on the articles at the end of the first week, each participant will share findings with the rest of the group. Most important in these oral reports is an assessment of the value of each article to the rest of the class.

At the end of the first week, each teacher should have prepared a lesson plan for the use of regional dialect study in the classroom. Whether or not this lesson plan is incorporated into the lesson plan on social dialects (covered in the second week) is immaterial. What *is* important is for the teacher to have a specific written plan in hand that can be carried into the classroom.

The second week, devoted to social dialects, offers an opportunity for two important areas of discussion and study. The first is an examination of current methods in school settings regarding the teaching of reading and writing to speakers of other dialects, whether students be black, brown, or white. The second area for more detailed discussion is

ethnic dialect in literature. Leo Rosten, Jacy Early, and Manuel Ortiz are too often ignored as practitioners of dialect in literature.

Again, as in the first week, participants should be assigned journal articles. The final day should be devoted to oral reports, lesson plans for social dialect work in the classroom, and the evaluation. Much time is saved on the final day if each teacher has enough copies of his or her lesson plan to distribute to other members of the class.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

The materials described in the models are the core of a successful workshop. But additional materials will be required according to the region in which the workshop takes place. A course conducted in Texas may be concerned with attitudes toward Spanish-American dialects, while one in Chicago would perhaps have greater concern with Appalachian English.

The following items represent a sampling of helpful material. Most of the items should be in the classroom, particularly during the longer workshops. Many of the journal articles, of course, will not be available unless the workshop is held on the university campus. The other materials can be easily transported to the site of the workshop. Some items have not been included in this listing. For example, it is assumed that several desk dictionaries will be on hand. When speaking of dictionaries in the two-week workshop, the leaders may wish to bring additional materials, such as Samuel Johnson's dictionary, or some fascicles of the Middle English dictionary currently being prepared at the University of Michigan.

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WORKSHOP LEADERS AND CONSULTANTS

Following is a list of workshop leaders and consultants listed alphabetically by state. Washington, D.C. and part of Canada are included. Some consultants prefer that home addresses be used, due to tardiness of institutional mails.

Consultants are not restricted to the area in which they reside. When other duties prevent their participation in a workshop, they will be happy to suggest additional qualified leaders.

The list is comprehensive, but not exhaustive. Some states have no listing, others have very few. For further information on possible workshop leaders or consultants, write directly to Thomas L. Clark, Department of English, University of Nevada, Las Vegas, Nevada, 89154. An open file has been established to maintain a current list of available consultants.

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The Legitimacy of the Black Idiom

Geneva Smitherman, Harvard University

A brief review of linguistic and anthropological findings on black language and black culture, followed by a description of those linguistic features that blacks share with whites and those features that are unique. Outlines a proposed model of black linguistic competence. Recorded at the Conference on College Composition and Communication, Boston, March 1972. (28 min.)

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